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Eigen haard is goud waard? Een studie naar de woonsituatie, het verhuisgedrag en recidive van (ex-)gedetineerden

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Cover Page



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Summary

THERE'S NO PLACE LIKE HOME?

A study on housing, mobility and recidivism among (ex-)detainees.

INTRODUCTION

A stable housing situation is considered to be an important condition for successful reentry after a period in prison (Petersilia, 2003; Van den Braak, e.a., 2003; Baldry, McDonnell, Maplestone & Peeters, 2006; Bradley, Oliver, Richardson & Slayter, 2001). Firstly, housing is important for the possible influence on ex-prisoners' well-being. For example, research has shown that homeless persons show a lower well-being than people with a stable housing situation (Thomas, Gray & McGinty, 2012). Furthermore, housing is of importance for its assumed influence on the risk of recidivism. People with housing have more to lose and have more social ties (Skardhamar, 2003; Huebner & Pleggenkuhle, 2015), and according to the social control theory, housed individuals are therefore at lower risk to commit a crime (Hirschi, 1969). Despite the presumed importance of the housing situation of (ex-)prisoners, relatively few studies have been done on this topic, especially in the Netherlands.

The overall goal of this thesis, is providing insight into the housing and mobility of prisoners and ex-prisoners and their relation with recidivism. The main research question is:

What are the housing and mobility patterns of Dutch detainees and ex-detainees, and what is its relation with recidivism?

This thesis uses data from the Dutch Prison Project to answer research questions about housing, mobility and recidivism (Dirkzwager e.a., 2018). The Prison Project is a nationwide, longitudinal study among 1904 Dutch pre-trial detainees, who were interviewed during their detention and answered questions about their lives before prison. Six months after release 946 respondents were found and interviewed again to gain information about their lives after prison. Information about their housing and moving situation was obtained through these interviews as well as through officially registered data. Information about recidivism six and 24 months after detention was obtained from officially registered data.

RESULTS

Chapter two described housing situations of (ex-)detainees and focused mainly on homelessness, both before and after a period in detention. Being homeless after a detention spell decreases the possibility of successful reintegration. Homelessness affects many other aspects of life, e.g. it lowers the chances of finding or holding down a job (Ferguson, 2018; Slesnick e.a., 2018) and makes it more difficult to start or continue treatment for an addiction (Bradley e.a., 2001; Fontaine & Biess, 2012). Furthermore, the homeless are said to be in social isolation (Dyb, 2009), while a good social network is essential for successful reintegration (Boman & Mowen, 2017). Knowledge on homelessness patterns among (ex-)detainees could help improve reintegration policies. The main research questions in this chapter were therefore:

*To what extent are (ex-)detainees homeless, both before and after their prison spell?
To what extent do ex-detainees lose their housing after release and to what extent, on the converse, are they able to achieve new housing after a period of homelessness?*

One of the main findings was the large amount of variation in housing patterns of (ex-)prisoners. Having a house, a place to live, is one of the first needs of prisoners upon release. Good housing is an important condition for successful reentry. This chapter showed that part of the ex-detainees succeed in maintaining or obtaining housing. However, another part lost their housing during their stay in prison or returned to being homeless again. More specifically, results showed that ten percent of the research sample was homeless prior to incarceration (i.e. living on the street, in a shelter, or for short periods of time with various friends, relatives or acquaintances). The percentage of homeless respondents grew during detention, meaning that upon release a bigger part of the sample is homeless. Six months later, however, a smaller percentage of ex-detainees are homeless than before incarceration. This implies that many ex-prisoners need some time to get their lives back on track.

Although nearly a third of the sample is homeless at least once during the time of the study, few ex-detainees remain homeless during the entire research period. A proportion of the prisoners who entered detention being homeless, do find a place to go to upon release and remain there at least six months. Others are not able to find housing, or lose their new house again during the months after release. Conversely, some detainees who did not enter prison homeless, lose their house during or shortly after the stay in detention. These results and the variation in housing and homelessness patterns make clear that homelessness is an important focal point in the reentry process of ex-detainees. A good reintegration into society requires a good housing situation (Petersilia, 2003), and this chapter showed many prisoners and ex-prisoners lack such a housing situation.

Chapter three moves on to provide insight in general mobility patterns. Since moving can sustain a big impact in the lives of the movers, and especially (ex-)prisoners who move, the goal of this chapter is gaining knowledge on moves among (ex-)detainees. Chapter three focuses on moves during prison (i.e. does the detainee have another address upon release from prison than he had at the moment of entering detention?) and during the first six months after release. The main research question was:

What are the mobility patterns of ex-detainees, both before incarceration to shortly after release and during the first six months after release?

Chapter three included only those respondents who had housing during the entire research period. The results are based on 587 respondents without any period of homelessness. By looking at different periods before and after detention, different types of moves could be distinguished. *Direct movers* are those who moved to a new address upon release and did not return to the same address from before prison. *Delayed movers* are those who initially returned to their pre-prison address, but moved later on during the six months after release. *Frequent movers* are the ones who moved more than once during the study period. Insights into mobility patterns and types of movers can help break down the relation of moving and recidivism.

As shown in the previous chapter for homelessness, this chapter likewise showed great variation in patterns of moving. As much as 41 percent of the sample moved at least once during the study period, which is much greater than the 10 percent of the general public that moves in the Netherlands (CBS, 2017). Furthermore, ten percent of ex-detainees moved twice or even more, both during and after prison. Nearly a quarter of the sample moves during detention, but remains at this new address during the six months post-release. The very high moving frequency found in this chapter could influence reentry processes and should therefore be a focal point during detention and after release.

Mobility patterns are studied more closely in chapter four. Since a large amount of variation possibly exists between different moves (Vogel et. al, 2017) the third goal of this thesis is to look more closely at mobility patterns, and describe them in more detail. Chapter four focuses on specific features of moves, namely the distance moved (i.e. the distance in kilometers between the address of origin and the destination address) and the possible change socio-economic status that comes with moves to a new neighborhood. The previous chapter made clear that (ex-)detainees are homeless or move relatively often. Specific aspects of mobility, such as socio-economic neighborhood status and distance moved, could also be of importance for (ex-)prisoners and recidivism, besides these general housing and mobility patterns. These two factors could, for example, impact social contact with others and recidivism rates (Lee

e.a., 2017; Morenoff & Harding, 2014). This chapter, therefore, studies mobility patterns in more detail and focuses on socio economic neighborhood status and distance moved. The main research question was:

What do specific features, such as distance moved and changes in socio-economic neighborhood status, of mobility patterns look like for (ex-)detainees, both before and after release?

Results are based on 240 respondents who moved at least once during the study period.

Remarkably only a small percentage of movers move within their own neighborhood. The majority move to a new neighborhood. In addition, while most movers within the general population move fewer than ten kilometers away, a relatively large amount of (ex-)prisoners moves to a new address at least fifteen kilometers away from their old address. Upon release from prison, ex-prisoners generally moved farther away from their address prior to incarceration than ex-prisoners who moved during the six months after release. This latter group stayed closer more often.

More than half of the movers went to a new neighborhood with a similar socio-economic status as the previous neighborhood. Most movers, therefore, do not experience an upward or downward change in neighborhood status. However ex-detainees who, prior to incarceration, lived in a neighborhood with a high status, have a bigger chance to move to a lower status neighborhood. This coincides with other studies (Warner, 2016; Massoglia e.a., 2013), which also showed that people living in good neighborhoods before prison have more to lose and tend to move downwards.

The distance moved as well as the neighborhood change could influence the reentry process (Morenoff & Harding, 2014). Chapter four showed that a large part of the movers go to new neighborhoods and move relatively far away. This could increase the influence on recidivism further.

Finally, Chapter five relates all aspects from the previous chapters to recidivism amongst the research group. Although housing situations are thought to be of importance in the reentry process, recidivism studies, in general, focus more attention on factors such as family and work, and less on housing (Fontaine & Biess, 2012; Makarios e.a., 2010). However, all housing aspects described in previous chapters, possibly relate to recidivism (Steiner e.a., 2015; Vogel e.a., 2017; Clark, 2016). With the impact of recidivism on society in mind, this thesis aims to gain knowledge on the influence of different housing and mobility patterns on recidivism. Chapter five, therefore, relates general housing and mobility patterns, as well as specific features of mobility, to recidivism. This chapter uses data on all 867 respondents and uses a propensity score method to analyze the data.

First, homelessness was related to recidivism. Results showed that ex-prisoners who experienced periods of homelessness recidivate more often than those without any homeless spells. On top of that, experiencing multiple periods of homelessness is related to a higher chance of recidivism compared to experiencing a single period of homelessness. These results emphasise the importance of preventing homelessness.

Next, mobility patterns were related to recidivism. A first comparison between movers and non-movers showed that movers recidivate more often than non-movers. However, a breakdown into different types of movers (i.e. direct movers, delayed movers and frequent movers) made clear that direct movers recidivate less than non-movers. Moving during detention, i.e. going to another address upon release rather than the address prior to incarceration, could be positive for some prisoners. It could be hypothesised that those are the movers who decided to get out of their old criminogenic environment and start over. During the six months after release, frequent movers recidivate more than non-movers.

The last research question studies the distance moved and neighborhood status and its relation to recidivism. Results showed no significant difference in recidivism rates between those who moved nearby and those who moved farther away. Considering recidivism in the long term, ex-detainees who moved to a lower status neighborhood, recidivate more than those who moved to an equal status or higher status neighborhood. During the entire follow-up period, respondents who moved to higher status neighborhoods recidivated the least.

Altogether, this thesis provides an insight into the diffuse housing and mobility patterns of detainees and ex-detainees and its effects on recidivism, and proves the importance of considering housing and mobility in reintegration policies.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Several recommendations for future research can be outlined. First, a possible underestimation exists of the amount of homeless people in the dataset. Three points in time were used to establish the housing situation and possible homeless spells: prior to incarceration, directly after release and six months after release. However, if a respondent was not homeless in month one and six after release, but was indeed homeless during, for example, month three, this does not show in the data. The same is true for moves. Respondents possibly moved more often than currently appears from the data. We looked at addresses during the first and six month after release. Different addresses in those months signified a move. In theory, a respondent could also have moved between month three and four, but this isn't shown in the current data. Furthermore, part of the prisoners were not located after release to participate

in the post-prison interview. Likely, part of this group were homeless persons or people who moved, since those would be more difficult to locate. A recommendation for future studies is therefore to use more moments during the study period to measure the housing situation. This would specify housing and mobility patterns even more accurately.

Furthermore, future research could enquire from its respondents their reasons for moving. This way, it would be clearer if the (ex-)detainee moved voluntarily or because he had no other choice. Since voluntary moves could be expected to lead to a lower risk of recidivism than involuntary moves, it is important to find out the reasons behind a move. Current data is not able to give this information.

Lastly, future research could provide more insight into the detention period itself, and steps that are undertaken to provide (ex-)prisoners with the help they need considering their housing situation. This could help influence policies.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Firstly, results of this study could help policy makers respond to factors influencing housing and mobility patterns of detainees and ex-detainees. In turn, they could influence what happens during possible spells of homelessness and mobility patterns. This study showed that demographic studies about homelessness and moving among the general population (see for example Van Laere, 2017; Buster e.a., 2015; Kley & Mulder, 2010) cannot be applied equally to housing and mobility patterns of (ex-)detainees.

Also, policy makers should reexamine the possibilities for detainees to maintain their house during their stay in prison. De Vereniging Nederlandse gemeenten (VNG, 2009) provides several options for this. With the results of the current study in mind, these options could be evaluated and expanded to help detainees maintain a stable situation where possible.

Thirdly, this study has shown that the first six months after release are crucial for ex-prisoners, and that these months bring a lot of changes in housing situations. Instead of focusing mainly on the moment of release and ensuring prisoners have a place to go upon release, focus should be extended to at least the first six months after release. Ex-prisoners should be followed up with and guided in achieving and/or maintaining a good housing situation.

A concluding recommendation is to not focus solely on the homeless ex-prisoners, but also focus on the group with housing. The variation within the group with housing is significant. Whilst a large part of this group were shown to move often, which suggests unstable patterns, chapter five also showed that some moves could be positive and lead to less recidivism. The variation in movers should therefore also receive attention from policy makers to better understand patterns and motivations for moving. In conclusion, policy should

focus on all aspects studied in the current thesis, in order to achieve the biggest reduction in recidivism.